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The effects of education programmes on Atlantic bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) behaviour

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Abstract

Atlantic bottlenose dolphins (Tursiops truncatus) are found in zoos and aquaria throughout the world. As the number of facilities with dolphin shows and interaction programmes increases, it becomes more important to understand the effects of such programmes on dolphin behaviour. The present study examined the short-term effects of dolphin shows and interaction programmes on the behaviour of Atlantic bottlenose dolphins at six facilities. Rates of affiliative behaviour, aggressive behaviour, repetitive behaviour and percentage of time spent socialising were found to be unrelated to dolphin shows or interaction programmes. Additionally, dolphins exhibited higher rates of behavioural diversity, diversity of swimming style, and play behaviour following shows and interaction programmes. These results suggest that dolphin shows and interaction programmes can be an important part of an enrichment programme for dolphins in zoological institutions. However, individual differences should be considered when animals participate in these types of programmes.

Keywords: *animal management, animal welfare, dolphin interaction programmes, dolphin shows, dolphin swim-with programmes, environmental enrichment*